

CORRECTED TRANSCRIPT

Marion Barry 1978 Mayoral Primary Campaign Oral History Project

Interview with Warren Graves

Conducted on August 21, 2017 by Betty King

Warren Graves worked on Walter Washington's successful campaign for Mayor of DC in 1974 and then became an assistant to the Mayor. When Marion Barry unseated Mayor Washington in 1978, he invited Warren to remain on his staff. Warren served in various capacities in all four of Barry administrations and continued in senior positions in the administrations of mayors Kelly, Williams, Fenty and Gray.

BK: Today is Monday, August 21st, 2017. My name is Betty King, and I'm talking to Warren Graves. Thank you, Warren, for agreeing to participate in the project. We appreciate it.

WG: Thank you for inviting me.

BK: Are you a native Washingtonian?

WG: No. I'm from Alabama, actually.

BK: Are you?

WG: Right, yeah.

BK: And when did you come to Washington?

WG: I came to Washington in 1964. I grew up in a place called Opelika, Alabama, which is about eighteen miles north of Tuskegee, six miles northeast of Auburn, Alabama. So, there was a big university complex where I grew up, with Auburn being the big white college and everything. You know, it's Alabama's rival. So, what happened is that I went to Tuskegee for a couple of years, and then I decided I wasn't learning anything. The high school that I went to in Opelika, Alabama, was called the J.W. Darden High School, and most of the teachers that we had – well, it was a black high school. I went to all-black educational institutions, and most of my teachers were people who had PhDs and masters'.

Matter of fact, one of my best friends when I was in high school, his father worked with the post office. The reason he worked for the post office – and he had a couple of masters' degrees, but he couldn't find a job in education teaching that paid as much as the post office did. So anyway, I went to Tuskegee, and then I decided to volunteer for the draft and went into the army. And when I went into the army, I was assigned to West Point. And so, when I got to West Point, at that time – they stopped it after a while, but just normal servicemen could audit the classes that the cadets were taking.

BK: So, there's an ordinary military establishment at West Point in addition to the academy. Is that correct?

WG: Yeah, it supports the academy. Yeah, we had regular people. Regular army people, yes. But they're all there to support the educational pursuits of the whole institution. And so, I was in the service during the – as a matter of fact, I was on duty the day President Kennedy was assassinated, and I had to call everybody back from leave and all that sort of thing, and everybody went on alert. So, when I got out of the service, I came to Howard University to continue my education, so to speak. And I had an uncle, Bryant Glenn Harris, who was teaching at Howard, and I had another uncle, Howard King Harris, who was teaching down at Hampton. So, I stayed with H.K. – we called them by their initials, B.G. and H.K. So, I stayed with H.K., because he was not in DC, and he had a housekeeper who would come in and clean up and cook two or three times a week, and so I partied a lot. But I got to meet a lot of people up at Howard who were involved in the civil rights movement and became friends with Stokely Carmichael [a prominent figure in the civil rights and pan African movements]. And then when John Wilson [DC activist, later elected to the City Council] and Marion Barry came to town, I met them,

and I worked in Mayor Barry's campaign for the school board, along with Thornell Page [head of DC extension service and Democratic activist] and Reggie Robinson and all those guys. And I participated in a – we had a regular poker game that we had at John Wilson's house, and you had Ivanhoe Donaldson [Barry's 1978 campaign manager], Reggie Robinson –

BK: What was Reggie doing then?

WG: I don't know. Reggie was always working for some type of organization. I have no idea what he was doing then, but he was still associated with SNCC [Student Non-Violent Coordinating Commission] and civil rights, because John Wilson came to DC to head up the SNCC office here. And so, Reggie was very close to him. Eric Jones. You know, Eric and Reggie was one of those people who were Freedom Riders and things like that, going down into Mississippi and places like that. So, I got to know all those guys. I was not involved in SNCC itself during the time that they were, militating on behalf of civil rights and things like that, but I did get to know them and worked with them after that.

BK: Well now, when I first met you, you were chief of staff for Mayor Washington [first mayor elected after passage of the Home Rule Charter].

WG: No, no, I was an assistant to Mayor Washington.

BK: Oh, you were an assistant? Okay.

WG: Yeah, Mayor Washington really didn't have a chief of staff. He had what he called a general assistant. And the organization of the government was different then, and it has evolved over the years. So now you have a chief of staff in the Mayor's Office and a chief of staff in the city administrator's office, and almost every large organization,

companies and things like that, have chiefs of staff. I was an assistant – well, first, I was a special assistant, and then I got my title changed to assistant to the –

BK: So, your first government job was in the Mayor's Office, was it?

WG: Yeah.

BK: And how did that come about?

WG: Well, I was working as a registered lobbyist. I used to follow broadcast and cable legislation up on the Hill, and I got to know Bill Lucy [secretary-treasurer of the Association of State, County and Municipal Employees] and Jim Hudson [attorney]. And Mayor Washington's campaign, there was a guy name John Dean, who had managed Jay Cooper's campaign.

BK: Now was this the first campaign in 1974, when – the first Home Rule campaign?

WG: Right. So, John Dean was campaign manager, and they had recruited him because he had managed a campaign down in Alabama, Jay Cooper's campaign in Alabama. And he had also written a book. It was about as thick as my thumb. So, he had this reputation, and they got into the campaign and Bill Lucy and Jim Hudson called me because they knew me. I had worked in a thing called the Reformed Democrats, and we were trying to fight Bill Lucy and Walter Fauntroy [first elected non-voting Delegate to the US House of Representatives from DC]. And we ran candidates for the Central Committee – it was called the Democratic Central Committee at the time [later called the DC Democratic State Committee] – and we ran John Wilson as the national committeeman [to represent DC on the Democratic National Committee].

John was the national committeeman candidate, and a lady by the name of Cathy Boucrée was the national committeewoman. And what we did is that we put together Reformed

Democrats, and I was a campaign manager for that. We didn't run candidates all over town, but we did run them in about three or four wards, and we won three wards. And so, we got people on the Central Committee that we had gotten elected. John didn't win, but that's where I met a lot of people who were active in Democratic politics in the city. The way we became close with Bill Lucy is that we sued him. Our campaign sued him because he did not live in the city. He laughs about it now, but we sued him, and we sent people – he had an apartment down in Southwest, but he lived out in Maryland, out in Silver Spring over there. So, we caused him to buy a house up in – well, 1801 Locust Road is where he lives, actually. He lives there now. He said that was the best thing that ever happened to him when we sued him, because he bought this house for about sixty-some-thousand dollars, now it's worth about three, four million dollars. (Laughter.) So, they came to me and said, "Listen, the campaign is not very well organized, so we want you to come over there and organize the campaign. So, I went to the campaign and –

BK: So that was the '74 –

WG: That was the '74 campaign.

BK: And Walter Washington was running against Cliff Alexander [lawyer and first African-American Secretary of the Navy appointed by President Carter]?

WG: Yeah, Cliff Alexander.

BK: Yeah, in the primary. They were both Democrats, right?

WG: Yeah. And I don't know if you remember the name Vincent Cohen [prominent DC attorney]?

BK: Of course.

WG: Vinnie was Cliff Alexander's campaign chairperson, and Bill Lucy was Walter Washington's campaign chairperson. And back then, the campaign chairpersons of the campaign committees used to go on radio and debate and talk about their candidates and things like that. It was very civilized. And then people would go and sit down and have a bite to eat and something to drink and pick up the politics later on. But we went in, and I was a deputy campaign manager, and we won. And then I went back to – I was working for a thing called Citizen Information Project and we were suing the FCC [Federal Communication Commission] and all of the major broadcast companies and things like that.

Then we formed a thing called the National Black Media Coalition. A guy named Bill Wright and I flew all over the country to different communities, and we talked to people who had been active in civil rights or just local affairs, and some people who had an interest in broadcast. At that time, there were only two broadcast properties in the whole country that was owned by a minority, and we wanted to increase that, and so we testified before the relevant committees up on Hill. I think it was the Subcommittee on Power and then one on communication, in both the House and the Senate.

But anyway, I went into the campaign, and I went back to what I was doing, and then they called me and asked me if I wanted to work in the Mayor's Office. It paid much more than what I was making at the time, and I had two small kids, and so I said yes.

Now, the first job I had was with the Office of Community Service, which was part of the Mayor's Office. So Mayor Washington told me he wanted me to work in that office.

BK: Was that sort of constituent services?

WG: Yeah, it was constituent service, a little bit more than that. They worked for the Office of Planning at that time, and Office of Planning was part of the Mayor's Office, too. And I don't know, did you ever hear of a guy named Ben Gilbert?

BK: Of course. Famous Ben Gilbert.

WG: Well, Ben Gilbert, you know, had been an editor at the *Washington Post*, and they kicked him out because he supported Walter Washington, and they wanted Walter Washington out of there. So, I went to work –

BK: Well, so, Ben Gilbert then came over and was director of planning for the District of Columbia, wasn't he?

WG: Yeah. I mean, that was his title, but he was sort of like a deputy city administrator. I mean, he had a huge portfolio.

BK: Now, who was the city administrator in that first administration?

WG: Julian Dugas. And Julian, as city administrator, I think had three people working for him. He had an assistant and a secretary. And the thing about it is that there were no interfaces between Julian and the – department director's office had some things like that. He dealt directly with the people. And when they had meetings, they could not send a representative to the meeting. They had to be there themselves. I think that it worked pretty good. I mean, the government was not as large as it is now. I tried to find some budget books and stuff to bring with me. Only thing I could find was these things that when the mayors got sworn in in '74 and '78, when Marion got sworn in, the programs and things. But you probably have those yourself, don't you?

BK: I don't. We can do them later.

WG: Yeah, we can do them later. And then I – and that's how it started, is I became the special assistant to the mayor.

BK: And of course, that was the transition from the District government being an agency of the federal government to the beginning of Home Rule. That was the first mayor elected in the Home Rule.

WG: Right. I was talking to some people about the very same thing that we're talking about now and they were talking about the different mayors that I worked for, and they asked me who did I think had the most difficult job as mayor. And I told them Walter Washington. Walter Washington had to prove that a black man could do this. You know, he laid the groundwork for Marion and everybody who came behind him. And there was a lot of opposition to him because, at that time, the District government, every agency in the District government had a patron up on Capitol Hill who was a congressman, and they ran it. And they'd people those agencies with their constituents, their family members, and their friends. And that was a very difficult thing to overcome. So, the first couple of years there were very – it got kind of dicey.

BK: I can imagine.

WG: I mean, there were a lot of confrontations and things like that.

BK: And some of them went on into the Barry administration, too.

WG: Yes.

BK: Some of them went on. So, we come to 1978. You were in the government, so you could –

WG: And then I left to work on the campaign.

BK: Great, now tell me about that. What was your position in the campaign?

WG: I was deputy campaign manager again. They had a guy named Lacy Streeter, who was a friend. I mean, he was in the Housing Department and stuff like that, and Julian thought that he had a good organizational ability.

BK: Lacy Streeter, God –

WG: Lacy Streeter was the campaign manager.

BK: I haven't heard that name in years. And he had been in what department? He came out of the administration to manage the campaign and he'd been in which department?

WG: I think he was in Housing. And so, Lacy was the campaign manager, and around that time Joe Yeldell had risen in the government. I think he was a like general assistant to the mayor, sort of like a chief of staff. But he and Julian were basically on the same page, and so there was not a whole lot of conflict. I mean, institutionally, what happens when you have a chief of staff and a city administrator, you have this conflict. And I don't know whether you saw it with Ivanhoe [Donaldson, Barry's campaign manager, later Chief of Staff] and Elijah [Rogers, Barry's first City Administrator]. Not getting off the subject, but Elijah did a smart thing when he got here. First thing he did is he kept his mouth shut for about six, seven months, didn't say anything. And then he –

BK: And then he made his move.

WG: – sort of maneuvered Ivanhoe out to –

BK: Department of Labor.

WG: – Department of Labor, yeah. That's it.

BK: Or rather Employment Services, yeah.

WG: Right, yeah. Something like that. Yeah, so I went over there as the deputy campaign manager, and I remember this very clearly. We had gotten word that Marion was going to drop out of the race.

BK: Oh, the famous Saturday Night Massacre?

WG: Yeah, we got word. So, I call Ivanhoe, and Ivanhoe and I met for lunch one day, and I was screaming at him, telling him, “You all can’t do this.” I mean, because the projections that we had done had shown that we were going to win.

BK: Because Marion was in the race, taking votes away from Sterling [Tucker, the incumbent Chair of the City Council who was also running for Mayor].

WG: Right, yeah. So, I don’t know, but if you go back and if you look at the results of that campaign, I think there was only about 1,300-some votes separating all three candidates.

BK: That’s right. It was a third, a third, a third, except we [in the Barry campaign] had about a couple of thousand more than either of you all.

WG: Yeah. And so, the projections that we had done – and I’ve still got those papers somewhere – is that – well, Walter Washington and Marion Barry flipped. Sterling stayed exactly where he was. And what happened was that – and you can go look this up too – was that I think Walter got 9 percent of the vote in the Georgetown precincts, a sitting mayor. And the projection that we had done, and we were trying to be conservative, we knew that he wasn’t going to get a lot, but we thought he would get 20 percent. And if he had got 20 percent, he would have won.

BK: Well, there were two reasons for that. One was that Marion started organizing in Ward 3 in 1976, when he had to run for reelection.

WG: Oh, yeah, I know that.

BK: And the other thing is that Polly [Shackleton, Council member from Ward 3] came back from a long vacation. She was running unopposed and endorsed Sterling. So those were two factors that cut down on Walter's vote in Ward 3.

WG: Sterling and I go to the same church now.

BK: Do you?

WG: Oh, we're great friends now, but back then, Sterling didn't know my name, or he knew it but he just wouldn't say it. And if I ran into him in the hallway, he would say, "Hi, guy." But now we call each other, we go out to –

BK: When you see him, would you ask him if he'd talk to me for this project?

WG: Sure, yeah. I'll pick him up and bring him over here, yeah.

BK: How is he?

WG: Well, he's doing okay.

BK: He's (indiscernible) as well?

WG: Yeah, he's like ninety-two years old, you know. Ninety-two, ninety-three years old.

BK: Well, if he would talk to me, I would appreciate it.

WG: Yeah.

BK: That's a sidebar to this.

WG: Okay. So, Ivanhoe and I met and had –

BK: David Eaton [Pastor of All Souls Unitarian Church] tried to get a meeting between Sterling and Marion, with the idea that Marion would withdraw. And he said it was going to be a private meeting, but Marion went early, sat outside David's house, and saw that it wasn't going to be a private meeting, that Bob Washington [Sterling's campaign

chairman] was there, a whole bunch of other people were there on the Sterling side. And he was supposed to walk in, and he never went, so it all fell apart.

WG: Oh, I didn't know that. That's good to know, yeah.

BK: If you listen to Max Berry's interview [for this oral history project] on the Gelman Library website, he talks at length about that, what we called the Saturday Night Massacre, because Polly and [champion golfer] Lee Elder and some other people were supposed to endorse Sterling on, like, Friday, but it was postponed because of the Saturday thing. And so, it all sort of became a mishmash and it was very – you know.

WG: Well, you know my uncle, B.G., was Marion's biggest supporter.

BK: Really?

WG: Oh, yeah, he was godfather to Christopher [Marion's son], too.

BK: What's his name?

WG: Bryant Glenn Harris. Marion used to live over near 11th and E, Northeast, on Capitol Hill.

BK: Right, I remember.

WG: And B.G. lived a couple blocks down the street, and he had an electrical contracting company aside from working up at Howard, and he had rented a lot of people's garages and things out back to run his business out of. But he had always supported Marion financially, and Marion was at the house all the time and all that stuff. But he's passed away. He passed away in 2003.

BK: Well, Marion had a lot of dedicated supporters over the years. A lot of great support.

WG: Well, one of the things that happened with me and Marion was that when you guys came into office, I was one of the few people – I think me and Reverend –

BK: Anthony.

WG: – Lewis Anthony [assistant for religious affairs], who had been on Walter Washington's staff, were asked to stay.

BK: Well, so, the primary's over, and you go back into Mayor Washington's office.

WG: Right.

BK: Is that correct? Okay. So, you'd resigned in order to be deputy at the campaign, and you came back into the office.

WG: Right.

BK: Okay. So, you and Lewis Anthony were there and just stayed on into the new administration?

WG: Right. Well, I had a conversation with the mayor.

BK: Oh, of course. No, I know.

WG: Mayor Barry, yeah.

BK: I don't mean it was your decision, I mean it was his decision to keep you.

WG: Yeah. One of the curious things that happened not too long ago, during the [Mayor] Vince Gray administration, when I was chief of staff to the city administrator, Allen Lu, Marion Barry used to visit me almost three times a week. I was the person that he came to talk to to get things done, and he would come up and say, "Hey, they tell me that you're the HNIC up here." And then, one day he's sitting here and he says, "Why are you able to do all this stuff for me?" I said, "Listen. Do you remember back then? I had so much scar tissue on my back from people sticking knives in it that there was no room for another knife to go in." He said people didn't accept me, not really, not totally, because I was from the Walter Washington administration.

BK: Now, how long did that last?

WG: I think some people say I still carry that. (Laughter.)

BK: Really?

WG: Yeah. I think so, yeah.

BK: Because, I mean, when you first were in Mayor Barry's office, what was your job, what was your title?

WG: I had the same job that I had with Mayor Washington. I was the – see, Labor didn't support Barry.

BK: No, I know they didn't.

WG: So he wanted to clean that up, reestablish ties with the Labor Movement and things like that, so part of my portfolio with Walter Washington was Labor, and I became the Labor person for Marion Barry, because I knew everybody in the Labor Movement, from Bill Lucy, Josh [Williams head of the consortium of DC labor unions], and all those people on down, and had a very close relationship with them.

BK: Josh Williams, you're talking about?

WG: Yeah, Josh Williams.

BK: Okay. But then over the years, you'd transitioned into various other positions, in and out of the Mayor's Office. Because at one point, you were in Intergovernmental Relations, weren't you?

WG: Right. But one of the things that – I mean, I'm really fortunate in the sense that when I was in government, I never spent more than like three and a half years in one job. I would always move to another little challenge. So, when Dwight Cropp went down to be

the director of Intergovernmental Relations, he asked me to come down with him. I knew a lot of the members of the council.

BK: And Congress and so forth?

WG: Yeah, and things like that. So, I went down there.

BK: When you're talking about the knives in your back, I just don't remember that.

WG: Well, Betty, you were one of the few people who were so busy, I don't think you were involved in intrigue. (Laughter.)

BK: No. (Laughter.) But I had a job that cut across everything, in dealing with Boards and Commissions and –

WG: That's right, yeah.

BK: – also, you know, I'm –

WG: You did a great job in cleaning up the whole mess that was there with Boards and Commissions.

BK: Yeah. Well, bringing it out of the closet.

WG: Right, yeah.

BK: Which you know well, because it seems to me that when you were working for Mayor Washington, you had –

WG: Well, we had started it, yeah.

BK: Yeah, you had that young man – not-so-young man – who was there doing it and so forth, and the women's –

WG: Oh, you remember that young man? His name was Everson Boyd Esters, Chuck Esters. And then he left the office and he went to work with Coleman Young.

BK: No, this was somebody who I had intended to hire, but who went to work for Nadine [Winter, Council member from Ward 6]. He was a young white man, or not-so-young white man. I think he was retired from the federal government later.

WG: I remember who you're talking about it. I don't remember his name.

BK: I can't remember his name either.

WG: But the first person they had on that was Chuck Esters.

BK: I had intended to hire him, but he – at one point I was getting information from him and he said, “You know, I think I’m going to stop giving you information, because if I give you all this information, you won’t hire me.” And I said, “Well, I’ll tell you what. You’re not going to be hired now, because you won’t cooperate.” So, he went to work for Nadine. But I never saw – I mean, of course there was going to be some suspicion –

WG: Intrigue?

BK: – but I didn’t see that degree of intrigue.

WG: Well, maybe I was somewhat hyperbolic about the thing about the night. Yeah.

BK: Well, possibly, but there probably were some people who were jealous. They felt that they should have those jobs. There was a certain amount of that.

WG: But when you guys came in, I was also the highest-paid person on staff. I don’t know if you remember that or not.

BK: No.

WG: And that seemed to follow me, because when we came down to work in the Gray administration, they had to adjust the salaries of all of their senior people because we were making – I mean, when I came into the Mayor’s and City Administrator’s Office, I was making over 200-and-some thousand dollars a year.

BK: No. Were you? (Laughter.)

WG: (Laughter.) And so, they called me in and said, “Listen, you have to take a pay cut”. So, they cut me down to 193,000-and-something.

BK: Oh, you were light years ahead of most of the people in the office.

WG: Yeah, that was the highest. But getting back to those days, I went down with Dwight, and I still have a relationship with Dwight. You know, he had a stroke and all that sort of stuff, and I haven’t been by to see he and Linda [his wife and a former Council member] in a while, but I keep in touch with him.

BK: Yeah, he was a nice guy. He is a nice guy. Well, and then at one point, you went out to White Plains and –

WG: Blue Plains [the sewage treatment facility]. Well, I was exiled out there by Marion Barry, actually.

BK: What did you do? How did you get exiled? (Laughter.)

WG: I think I blessed out Mary Lampson [one of Barry’s assistants].

BK: No.

WG: I did.

BK: You did what?

WG: In front of the mayor.

BK: What did you bless her out over?

WG: Mary had done this matrix, and she had put down every union person’s name that worked for the District government. And she had told the mayor that I should call and talk to those people at least once a month. And so, we were sitting in this meeting, so I turned to him, I said, “Are you listening to this? This is the dumbest thing I ever heard in my life.”

I said, “Labor is hierarchal. The only people that I have to stay in touch with are the leaders.”

BK: Bill Lucy, Josh Williams.

WG: That’s basically it, and some of the large union heads and things like that, you know.

BK: Right, exactly.

WG: And if I stay in touch with them and keep them in touch with the mayor, I’m doing my job. So, she was grading me, and so she says, “Well, I think you owe the mayor an apology, because you’re not doing your job.” And I just lit into her, and he started laughing and said, “Come on, Warren.” I said, “Come on? Shit, you know, you can’t be listening to her.” Anyway, so first thing they did was that 13 ½ Street, when you enter the District Building, it was called then, the Wilson Building now, the Board of Elections and Ethics was on the right-hand side when you came into the thing, and across the hall from that was a storage room that they used. They put me down in this storage room. They had a door and they had some boxes down there, and they put the door across the boxes –

BK: And that was your desk?

WG: – and that was my office. Yeah, supposedly.

BK: Now, how long into the Barry administration, first administration, was this?

WG: I think this was in the second administration.

BK: In the second administration? Okay.

WG: Yeah. Anyway, so they sent me down to the Blue Plains and then when I was down there, I got a call from Pat Seldon [Barry’s executive assistant], and she said, “Warren, the mayor would like to meet with you at 1133 North Capitol at 4 p.m. in the board

room.” I said, “Well, what does he want to meet with me for?” She says, “Warren, just be there.” So, I go over there, and he and I were in this boardroom by ourselves, and he told me that he wanted to bring the Democratic National Committee – convention, you know – to DC. And he told me that he had \$3.5 million to spend, and he wanted me to pull this whole thing together.

BK: Oh, great.

WG: And I said, “Well, what’s in it for me?” (Laughter.)

BK: You get to leave Blue Plains, for a starter.

WG: He said, “Well, what do you want?” I had also taken a grade cut, so I said, “Well, I want my grade back and I want to get out of Blue Plains.” He says, “Okay.” And so, I don’t know if you know Nate Landau? He’s a big –

BK: Of course.

WG: – Maryland developer. He was the head of the Site Selection Committee for the Democratic National Committee, and we got Senator Edmund Muskie to head the effort here. And Governor Hughes was over in Maryland, and Governor Baliles was down in Virginia, and it was like a three-state effort. We had a party down in Annapolis, a party down in Richmond, and we had one down here in Georgetown at the waterfront, where the little train used to run over your head.

BK: Oh, yeah. I can’t remember the name of that restaurant.

WG: Right, yeah. I think that party cost about \$75,000 that night, that one party did. We came in second to Atlanta.

BK: You know, the basic problem is that everybody wants to get away from –

WG: DC.

BK: – DC. I mean, the media and the Congress members and so forth.

WG: Yeah. So, after that happened, he and I renewed our relationship, and every time he got sick – and he did a couple of times, went into the hospital – I would go visit him and we would talk.

BK: Well now, you are, as far as I know, the only person who has served in senior position with every mayor from Walter Washington to –

WG: Vince Gray.

BK: – Muriel Bowser.

WG: Yes. Well, to Muriel. I haven't worked for her because I lost my job the day she took office.

BK: Oh, okay. But anyways, through Vince Gray.

WG: Right.

BK: And as I told you when we talked on the phone, at some point during the early days of the first Barry administration, you and I were talking, and I – very idealistic. I thought we were making great strides and –

WG: (Laughter.)

BK: So, when I said something about it and you said very quietly, "Same circus, different clowns" –

WG: Right, yeah.

BK: – would you still hold to that opinion for all of the mayors that you have served?

WG: Yes. The people aren't clowns in the sense – but you know what I mean. I still hold to that, because after having worked for so many mayors and been inside government, you

can see that this mayor wants to take the government in this direction. And the government is like this big ocean liner. It doesn't turn quickly.

BK: It flounders if you turn it too quickly.

WG: Yeah, you've got to make a wide – and it takes time and effort and you're struggling against the tides and things like that to turn it into the direction that you want. The other thing, too, is that the thing has evolved into people contributing to campaigns and things and then expecting something in return. So, what happens is that – and this was most evident in the change of government, going from [Mayor] Tony [Williams] to –

BK: [Mayor] Adrian Fenty.

WG: – Adrian Fenty.

BK: Tony Williams to Adrian Fenty.

WG: You know, I also managed the Tony Williams campaign and ran his transition.

BK: Did you?

WG: Yeah. So, what I saw there, and I think other people saw too, is that the people who were supporting Adrian, especially some of the young people, they wanted an immediate return on their investment, and they wanted contracts and things. And when Mayor Fenty was in office, I was working with Allen Lu, and I was not a government employee then, I was on a contract, and that's how I was making so much money, because I had a contract with the government. So, we had renovated RFK Stadium and we were building a new baseball stadium, and we were spending like \$600 million during the summer on school modernizations and we had these long projects that were going on, and you had people who didn't have the experience. They had formed these companies, engineering

companies and construction companies, and they wanted a 10, 20, 30-million-dollar contract, and had no history of performing those type of contracts.

BK: But they got the contracts?

WG: No.

BK: Oh, good.

WG: No, that was one of the things that we did not do. So, what we did is that we had conversations with the powers that be and said, listen, we would take these people and test them out. If they can handle this-size contract, we can move them up to something else, and they gained experience. So, we did build some capacity within the minority contractor community in the city in construction and engineering and architecture and stuff that would not have happened otherwise.

BK: Now, what about the [Mayor] Sharon Pratt Kelly administration? People kind of overlook that four-year period. What were you doing then?

WG: I like Sharon. I really like Sharon. When Sharon came into office, I was in Intergovernmental Relations. Then, she had a young man – I’m not going to name his name because he’s a really nice guy, but he’s kind of loose here – he would go to meetings, and he was the director of the Office of Community Service at that time. He would go to a meeting and he would stand up, “My name is so-and-so and I’m a GS-13 and I make this much money a year.”

BK: Oh, dear. Okay.

WG: And the office was falling apart, so one of her ladies called me and says, “Warren, the mayor would like for you to go over and straighten this office out.” So, I left the Office of Intergovernmental Relations and I went over there. They were located at the Reeves

Center. So, Vince and I had a staff of about twenty-eight, thirty people, because we had people who were assigned to the wards and things, communities.

BK: That was the last office that I had, in the fourth Barry administration.

WG: Yeah. So, what happened then was that John Wilson and I were very close friends, and John was chairman of the council, and some people who were very close to the mayor saw me and John. It was either after or at a fundraiser for Bill Clinton. Hillary Clinton came through here. Magic Johnson, Hillary Clinton, we had a little thing down in the Reeves Center. They're up on stage and stuff, and so these people saw me and John together, and this little whispering campaign started. She [Sharon] had expected John to run against her and she thought that I was – you know. So, as a matter of fact, she told me that I was burning the candle at both ends. So, I said, "Listen, a person in our position, you have to have full confidence in, and since you don't, I am going to resign from this position."

And so, I did. I think that happened on like a Saturday at a picnic over on Capitol Hill, and by the next Friday, I had about three or four memos on Mildred Goodman's desk. She was the secretary of District of Columbia, and she acted like Sharon Pratt Kelly's chief of staff. They had run through a couple of chiefs of staff who were male that didn't work, and Mildred, her power sort of increased. So, she called me and she told me, she says, "Warren, I got your letters. The mayor would like for you to stay in the position until she can find a replacement." And I said, "Well, the mayor and I had a conversation. That's something I can't do." So, I went back to Blue Plains. (Laughter.)

BK: (Laughter.) When in doubt, go to Blue Plains. So, then we come to the Tony Williams administration. Were you a supporter of him in his campaign for the first term?

WG: I was apolitical –

BK: Well, you were in government, so you were hatched [subject to the Hatch Act barring government employees from working on political campaigns].

WG: – at that moment. But what happened was that Doug Patton, Max Berry –

BK: Oh, God.

WG: – and I forget who else, called me and said, “We want to have breakfast, and we’ll meet you at the Mayflower on –” I forgot. I think it was a Thursday morning. So, we go down there. This is after Tony Williams had won the primary election. So, Doug and Max tell me that they want me to manage Tony Williams’ general election campaign. So, I say, “What are you talking about? He’s already won.” They said, “No, no, no, no.” He said, “We didn’t win because of the campaign, we won because of the voters’ desire for change.” So, I said, “Okay, so what does Tony say about that?” He said, “Well, you’re going to have breakfast with him tomorrow morning.” (Laughter.) So, I had breakfast, and I knew him because before then, I was director of communications for Marion Barry. He had brought Johnny Allen in there. Johnny called me down at Blue Plains and said, “I need you up here to help me run this office,” and then I thought Marion was going to run for office again, and I didn’t think he should. And I told him that and I told him, “Now, I’m out of here.” So, I resigned before his thing was over, and I didn’t get involved in any campaign.

BK: But was that the third term or the fourth term?

WG: That was the end of the third term. I have to tell you about the fourth term. End of the third term. So, I go to the Mayflower, Tony Williams comes, and we sit there, and it was a strange meeting. I said, “I met with Max and Doug and they want me to come manage

your campaign.” And he says, “Well, what did you say?” I said, “I wanted to know what you thought about that.” He said, “Well, are you going to do it?” I said, “Yeah.” He just got up and walked away. (Laughter.)

BK: That’s so Tony. That’s so Tony. Don’t waste time being personal, just cut to the chase.

WG: So, I did. There were a number of difficulties with that campaign, and there were a black/white divide. There was a homophobic divide, with Phil Pannell [political activist from Ward 8] around screaming about that.

BK: Oh, Phil always screamed about something.

WG: Yeah. And the first meeting that I had, I had it on that Sunday. So, this happened on a Friday with Tony, on a Thursday with Max and Doug. So, I called a meeting for all the ward coordinators and things like that, and I told people that you’ve got one chance to bitch, complain, this is it. Get it all out of your system. After this, I don’t want to hear anything else. And I’m going ward by ward. Phil had been drinking a little bit, and so he wants to interrupt this whole thing and talk about what he wanted to talk about. So, I had him kicked out. I said, “Phil, you have to leave.” And while he was gone, I appointed another Ward 8 coordinator.

BK: God, you are a brave man.

WG: Then, five minutes later, in comes Tony Williams and Phil Pannell. And Tony comes in and he sits next to me, and Phil sort of takes a seat right there in front of me, just glaring at me. I had been talking, so I just turned to Tony and I said, “I kicked Phil out, and—” I forgot who – “so-and-so is now the Ward 8 campaign, so he has to leave.” And the room was just totally quiet. And finally, Phil Pannell got up and left.

BK: Bravo.

WG: And things went on from there. But, yeah, so I went into the government with – went back into the government, because I had resigned, and I became the director of Intergovernmental Relations then, because Tony Williams said. And after the general election, he made me the transition director. We did that. So, I went back into the office, and I'd left again in August because it was worse than what it was when Marion Barry first came into office and I had been inside. When I went inside, all these people who were around Tony Williams – I mean, I had to get out of there. So, Doug said, "Listen, the mayor wants to bring baseball to DC, so why don't you go over to the Sports Commission, we'd give you a contract, and help us lay the groundwork to bring –"

BK: Oh, great job. Yeah.

WG: – "baseball back." And so, after that, Tony Williams was going out to neighborhood meetings and things like that, and he was getting booed a little bit. So, Anita Bonds [long tie supporter and staffer for Mayor Barry] was working in his office then, so she called me and asked me to be a surrogate for Tony Williams to go to these neighborhood meetings. And I did that, and this guy from the Fiscal Policy Institute, he was against it. And so, we had this dog-and-pony show at these ANC, these civic and citizens association meetings and things like that, where he would argue against the baseball stadium and I would argue for it. So that was a lot of fun. (Laughter.) And then Allen Lu came into my life, and he asked me to be his chief of staff when he was running the Sports Commission and changed it to (indiscernible) when we started doing schools. So, yeah.

BK: Okay, and then next comes Fenty.

WG: Yeah. I mean, Fenty made the Office of Public Education Facility Modernization part of his office.

BK: And so, you and Lu were in that together, doing the educational part?

WG: Uh-huh.

BK: Great. And then –

WG: Gray.

BK: Then comes Vincent Gray.

WG: Right. And he asked Allen Lu to be his city administrator.

BK: So, your career was tied to Lu –

WG: Yeah.

BK: – for a considerable period, then?

WG: For about – since 2004.

BK: Okay. Until –

WG: Thirteen years now. Well, it was from 2004 to 2015, in the government, yeah. But Allen and I have lunch or breakfast almost every week now.

BK: Now, in the mirror of hindsight, what do you think were the pluses and minuses of the Barry administration? Do you think that he did good things in some areas and bad things in others, and what is your appraisal of his overall impact on the city?

WG: I think Marion did great things in a lot of different areas. Marion's problem and his fault were personal. It had nothing to do with his abilities as an administrator, as a leader, as a person who had vision for the city to take it places and everything. I think he did fantastic. He continued the work that I said that Walter Washington had started that

proved that black people could govern, and he brought more black people into the government in senior-level positions than had ever been there before.

BK: Exactly.

WG: And he started some of the – I mean, with the Reeves Center [Barry built at 14th and U streets], trying to get the riot corridors back, to build them back up. I think he did –

BK: Well, and of course, the baseball stadium has done the same thing for its area and so forth. You put a major government-funded facility like that, and you make things happen.

WG: And the convention center, the new convention center. I mean, he altered the cityscape of the city and he altered the human-scape of the city, and how people viewed themselves and all this sort of thing. Yeah, I think Marion was a great mayor.

BK: I agree with you. I agree with you. But those of us who know him so well, we know he had his demons that sometimes took control of him. But basically, he did wonderful things.

This has been a wonderful interview. I appreciate it very much. Thank you so much.

WG: Oh, thank you. Sure.

[End of interview]